

President Biden appeals for unity

He faces a confluence of crises stemming from pandemic, insurrection & race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In what remains a crime scene from the insurrection on Jan. 6, President Joe Biden took the oath of office at the U.S. Capitol Wednesday, appealing to all Americans for “unity” and the survival of the planet’s oldest democracy.

“We’ve learned again that democracy is precious,” Biden said shortly before noon Wednesday after taking the oath of office from Chief Justice John Roberts. “Democracy is fragile. And at this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed.”

His words of assurance came four years to the day since President Trump delivered his dystopian “American carnage” address, coming on the heels of his Republican National Convention speech in Cleveland in July 2016



when he declared in strongman fashion, “I alone can fix it.”

When Trump fitfully turned the reins over to Biden without ever acknowledging the latter’s victory, it came after the Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6 that Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said he had “provoked,” leading to an unprecedented second impeachment. It came with

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Biden’s critical challenge

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Here is the most critical challenge facing President Biden: Vaccinate as many of the 320 million Americans as soon as possible.

While the Trump administration’s Operation Warp Speed helped develop the COVID-19 vaccine in record time, most of the manufactured doses haven’t been injected into the arms of Americans. And until that happens, the staggered U.S. economy won’t shake off this pandemic and return to anything resembling normal.

According to the CDC, as of Tuesday, 3.3% of the Indiana population had received one dose, 0.6% had received



“Hoosiers have risen to meet these unprecedented challenges. The state of our state is resilient and growing. Our foundation has held strong.”

- Gov. Eric Holcomb in his virtual fifth State of the State address Tuesday.



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two doses. There have been 642,425 doses received, 260,310 doses injected, or 41% of the total. Nationally, 3.2% of the population have received one dose, 0.5% two doses, with 31,161,075 doses distributed, 12,279,180 given and 39% of doses used.

The urgency is that the virus is mutating into a more infectious mode. As former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said on CBS "Face The Nation" last Sunday, the new variant is roughly 0.5% of all infections nationwide but said that likely will double each week. "That's the experience from other countries and that's the experience we've seen so far in the United States," he said. "So it's 1% now. It'll be 2%, then 4%, then 8%, then 16%, then 32%. So in about five weeks, this is going to start to take over."

Six days ago, President-elect Biden unveiled his strategy. "Our plan is as clear as it is bold: Get more people vaccinated for free. Create more places for them to get vaccinated. Mobilize more medical teams to get the shots in people's arms. Increase supply and get it out the door as soon as possible," Biden said at his pandemic plan rollout in Wilmington, Delaware. He characterized Operation Warp Speed as a "dismal failure."

"If you were to ask most people today, they couldn't tell you who exactly is getting vaccinated," Biden said. "What they do know is there are tens of millions of doses of vaccine sitting unused in freezers around the country, while people who want and need the vaccine can't get it."

Operation Warp Speed had projected 20 million Americans to be vaccinated by the end of 2020. That stood at just over 9 million on Jan. 1. Last week, the Trump administration finally said the Biden transition team would have full access to the vaccination process. Why that didn't happen shortly after the Nov. 3 election is a casualty in President Trump's "big lie"

that he actually won the election in a "landslide."

He didn't, and the last two months of what was supposed to be a transition became lost time and lives.

Last week, the Trump administration said it would release more doses to the states. Health & Human Services Sec. Alex Azar explained, "We've had so much success with quality and predictable manufacturing and almost flawless distribution of the vaccine. We had been holding back second doses as a safety stock. We now believe that our manufactur-



ing is predictable enough that we can ensure second doses are available for people from ongoing production, so everything is now available."

But two days later, the Washington Post reported that the shelf was bare; there were no surplus vaccines available. Those already in state hands were languishing in freezer boxes.

Biden's Chief of Staff Ron Klain said on CNN's "State of the Union" last Sunday, "We're inheriting a huge mess here, Jake, but we have a plan to fix it, the president-elect put out that plan on Friday. We think there are things we can do to speed up the delivery of that vaccine, and make that vaccine supply go farther. For example, one thing the president-elect mentioned yesterday was using the Defense Production Act to ramp up the production of a particular type of syringes that allow us to get six doses of the vaccine out of a vial instead of five."

The day after Biden announced the plan and a day before Klain's description of the "huge mess," Biden's vaccination point man, Jeff Zients, described the plan in four elements: Loosen restrictions on who can get vaccinated and when, set up more vaccination sites, mobilize rapid delivery, and invoke the Defense Production Act to produce more doses quickly.

Biden and Zients plan to use FEMA and National Guard troops to build the network of vaccination sites across the nation that will include big box stores as well as CVS and Walgreens. "We're going to throw the full resources and weight of the federal government behind this emergency," Zients promised.

Therein lies the flaw of the Trump administration: It sought to rely on the 50 states to provide logistics, distribute and publicize the process to a frightened and partially leery public. It helped produce the vaccine in less than a year, but relegated the next critical step – to actually vaccinate Americans – to states, many which are cash-strapped due to the economic fallout of the pandemic.

While Vice President Pence, Azar and Dr. Tony Fauci took doses as cameras rolled, President Trump did not, focusing his attention on overturning the election. Now we face a scenario where 60% of all COVID-19 infections have occurred since Election Day. The commander-in-chief was Missing In Action.

The Biden plan seemed like an exercise in com-

mon sense, asset management and not rocket science. And it's another indication that Trump and Pence, who chaired the White House coronavirus task force, were in far over their heads when it came to logistics and consistent messaging.

By Biden's inauguration on Wednesday, the death tolls crossed stunning thresholds: 400,000 in the U.S. (projected to reach half a million next month) and 9,000 in Indiana, projected to hit 12,400 by March 1. The good news on the Hoosier front is that the University of Washington's Health Metrics & Evaluation website projects 12,922 deaths by May 1.

Gov. Eric Holcomb suggested in last week's HPI Interview that there will be widespread access to most Hoosiers by March and April. Or as he put it, "It's a matter of weeks, not months. I do believe that March Madness will be a happier time than it was last year."

During his State of the State address Tuesday night, Holcomb added, "When you're eligible for your vaccination appointment, it's as easy as calling 2-1-1 or logging on to ourshot.IN.gov, just like more than 600,000 of your neighbors already have."

Had the Trump administration been fully engaged in logistics and messaging, fewer Americans would be dead and the economy would have recovered sooner. The key question today is whether the Biden administration will be more competent. ❖

Biden, from page 1

400,000 deaths from the coronavirus pandemic, thousands of schools shut down, local and state governments facing deficits, and emergency rooms overwhelmed.

"So now, on this hallowed ground, where just a few days ago violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundation, we come together as one nation under God, indivisible, to carry out the peaceful transfer of power as we have for more than two centuries," he said as former Vice President Mike Pence looked on. "As we look ahead in our uniquely American way, restless, bold, optimistic, and set our sights on the nation we know we can be and we must be.

"To overcome these challenges, to restore the soul and secure the future of America, requires so much more than words. It requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy, unity," Biden said, playing a role in his fifth consecutive inaugural ceremony on the west side of the Capitol. "Unity. In another January, on New Year's Day in 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. When he put pen to paper, the president said, and I quote, 'If my name ever goes down into history, it'll be for this act, and my whole soul is in it.'

"My whole soul is in it," Biden continued. "Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together, uniting our people, uniting our nation. And I ask every American to join me in this cause. Uniting to fight the foes we face, anger, resentment and hatred, extremism, lawlessness, violence, disease, joblessness and hopelessness. With unity, we can do great things, important things."

That this sacred ceremony was performed without a hitch just two weeks after Biden's embattled predecessor, Donald Trump, unleashed a mob on the U.S. Capitol



seemed like a modern miracle. It occurred in a fortress Washington, with 25,000 National Guard troops and miles of fencing and razor wire that turned the city into something akin to Baghdad's "Green Zone." It came after the mob chanted "Hang Mike Pence" and "Where's Nancy?" as they stalked the marble halls for Vice President Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Both survived and attended what had become a tormented "peaceful transfer of power."

Biden took the oath just minutes after Vice President Kamala Harris was sworn in, becoming the first female and Black to serve in the nation's second highest post.

Biden assumes the helm with multiple crises bearing down on the venerable republic. The pandemic which has killed 400,000 Americans kept the crowds away. As the economy staggered, more than \$4 trillion has been spent seeking to stabilize millions of American families and small businesses. The vaccine roll out has been deemed a "dismal failure" by the new president. The nation is still reeling from the racial strife emanating from the police murder of George Floyd last spring in Minneapolis.

Trump, who spent the past few months perpetrating what is now being called "the big lie" as he openly sought to overturn the will of a clear majority of American voters, refused to concede or host the Bidens, and ducked out to Mar-A-Lago earlier in the day. Leading into the Jan. 6 insurrection, he promised his "Stop the Steal" rally would be "wild" and then urged his supporters to march on the Capitol, where the mob broke windows, killed a Capitol policeman, and invaded the Senate chambers where Pence was presiding over his constitutional duty to counting Electoral College votes for congressional certification.

Biden Chief of Staff Ron Klain observed earlier in the day, "There was nothing inevitable about today."

In Trump's void, Biden appealed for the revival of a key ingredient for stable democracies and republics: The truth.

"What are the common objects we as Americans love, that define us as Americans?" Biden asked. "I think we know. Opportunity, security, liberty, dignity, respect, honor and, yes, the truth. The recent weeks and months have taught us a painful lesson. There is truth and there are lies, lies told for power and for profit. And each of us has a duty and a responsibility as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders, leaders who have pledged to honor our Constitution and protect our nation, to defend the truth and defeat the lies."

Biden said that while some see "unity" as a "foolish fantasy," he added, "I know that the forces that divide us are deep and they are real. But I also know they are not new. Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we all are created equal,



and the harsh ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart. The battle is perennial, and victory is never assured. Through civil war, the Great Depression, world war, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifices, and setbacks, our better angels have always prevailed. In each of these moments, enough of us – enough of us – have come together to carry all of us forward, and we can do that now. History, faith, and reason show the way, the way of unity. We can see each other, not as adversaries, but as neighbors.

Biden pledged that he will be a "president for all Americans" and will "fight as hard for those who did not support me as for those who did." He added, "We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue."

There are indications that Biden's unity appeal could take hold. When Avril Haines appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday to be confirmed as director of National Intelligence, former DNI Dan Coats appeared with her.

Biden, at age 78, becomes the oldest president

to take office (President Reagan left office at age 76 in 1981), coming more than three decades after his first presidential campaign. He is only the second Catholic president, and the first true creature of Congress (President Obama had served a mere four years in the Senate) to be elevated to office since President Lyndon Johnson came into office following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

Known as a moderate, Biden assumes power with an almost evenly split Congress, with Vice President Harris poised to break ties in the 50/50 Senate, while Democrats control the U.S. House with a 222-211 edge. He faces gridlock, unless corps of bipartisan moderates emerge to engage in compromise and deals.

Biden appealed to middle America: "Folks, this is a time of testing. We face an attack on our democracy



Vice President Harris and husband Doug Emhoff bid farewell to former vice president Mike Pence and wife Karen on Wednesday. When Pence, in a last act of the outgoing administration, left the Capitol, he walked through a door with badly cracked glass from the riot two weeks ago.

and on truth. A raging virus, growing inequity, the sting of systemic racism, a climate in crisis. America's role in the world. Any one of these would be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is, we face them all at once. Presenting this nation with one of the gravest responsibilities we've had. Now we're going to be tested.

"Are we going to step up, all of us?" he asked. "It's time for boldness, for there is so much to do. And this is certain. I promise you, we will be judged, you and I, by how we resolve these

cascading crises of our era. We will rise to the occasion, is the question. Will we master this rare and difficult hour? Will we meet our obligations, and pass along a new and better world to our children? I believe we must." ❖

Fallout from the Capitol riot

By MARK SOUDER

FORT WAYNE – The political fallout from the U.S. Capitol riots will continue to emerge for some time, months and possibly years, and vary over the longer haul from the immediate. Here are some guesses on impacts in different areas, but everything is always dependent upon unforeseeable variables as well.



1.) False claims of fraud likely destroyed election reform in the short-run.

When President Trump called people to Washington to "persuade" Congress to overturn the electoral vote, and the mob storms the U.S. Capitol Building and terrorizes Congress, they made election reform toxic in the

short-term at least. Real concerns that actually need to be discussed so future elections aren't stolen, not trumped-up

allegations about unproven fraud, have been subsumed by false ones. Instead of reform and putting the Democrats on the defensive, reform instead will likely be dismissed by a public increasingly sick of all the fighting as just more Republican unsubstantiated whining about Trump losing. It is also not an investigation when you have announced your conclusion in advance of any evidence.

2.) Republican primary challenges to pro-impeachment voters. Those who voted for the second impeachment of President Trump will likely have primary challenges if they run for reelection. Given that those who voted for impeachment probably were already less than worshipful to Trump, they probably would have had a primary challenger anyway. Perhaps their challengers will be more qualified than expected, but that is still unknown.

3.) Republican primary challenges to those who voted to certify the election results. This seems also likely to occur because, by definition almost, those who did so will no longer be deemed as sufficiently loyal to Trump. Even if the core Trump support goes down by half, there still will be likely be enough die-hards to mount primary challenges in many areas.

4.) Official Republican Party threats to incumbents will further weaken the influence of the actual political party organizations. Washington

and Wyoming have directly moved from being organizations that help elect all Republicans in fall campaigns in the state to controlled by party factions, not representative of a continuing structure. This is a terrible trend for less high-profile offices and election security (such as a structured organization dedicated to election day turnout and results oversight).

5.) Rhetoric, such as swamp attacks, from left and right is seriously undermining the system of trust. Rhetorical exaggeration – a key to igniting enthusiasm, the foundation of donations and political activism – has reached a point of serious danger on both sides. People of all views are more likely to believe a TV or movie version of what the CIA does, for example, than the government version. They believe movie stars and assorted flakes on an even level with an elected official or representative. A fake Russian site is viewed as just as credible (or more) as the New York Times or the local Board of Health. The American system was, is and hopefully will continue to be the greatest in the world's history. Not perfect, just the greatest ever given natural human flaws.

6.) The piousness of the liberals, after tolerating months and years of excess, is a bit much. Cities burning, excessive anti-law enforcement rhetoric, false claims against the legal system, trashing of capitalism, and rhetoric against those whose religious beliefs differ are merely part of the liberal excess, ALL excesses need to be condemned not just those on the side with which you disagree.

7.) The U.S. Capitol Building has never been stormed and control been seized by an attacking American mob before. This was an unprecedented attack. The Capitol building had burned down by the British in the War of 1812, after the U.S. had burned down the Canadian Capitol. Four Puerto Rican nationalists visiting the Capitol building opened fire on 200 members of Congress, wounding five. Around the country, cities have been burned and federal buildings attacked. Never anything like this. By any group of Americans. Ever. This riot was different.

8.) The delusional comments of the mob,



both during the assault and explaining what they did, is deeply disturbing.

The comments about the government, false narrations about fraud and stealing the election, seeming to be Trump-programmed robots at times ("the president asked me to come so I did"), and general ignorance of law and order (while proclaiming to believe in it) was astounding.

9.) The Capitol riots were an attack on our system of government, not a building.

The comments made it absolutely clear that the attack was on our system, not the building. They invaded the building because of disdain for the rule of law, a disdain for the 50 state governments that had authorized their electors, a disdain for over 50 judges and courts that did not even feel Trump had evidence enough to convene a hearing, a disdain for the popular vote, a disdain for

the Electoral College rules, and no understanding of the constitutional responsibility of the vice president. They talked about their rights when, in fact, they wanted to impose their minority will on the nation.

10.) Former President Trump's financial and legal problems will cloud his future impact.

Trump was a valuable marketing image, more effective to those holding his debt than cashing him out. That has begun to change. Debts are being called. This, combined with what is likely to be never-ending lawsuits, threatens his financial ability to be a force. His allies are also likely to feel the pressure. As more and more information becomes public, his base will likely continue to shrink. How far down he will go is unknown.

11.) President Biden's actions and whether Republicans can recapture an issue-based voice as opposed to being a Trump personality-driven party will play critical roles what happens next. Personality politics has always been critical in every political system in the world. It is not going away. But the survival of alternative views requires structures organized around ideas, not one individual. On the other hand, Biden is not likely to run for a second term. It is time to re-set. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana.

Hoosiers stocked presidential cabinets

By **TREVOR FOUGHTY**
Capitol&Washington.com

INDIANAPOLIS – As the United States prepares to transition presidential administrations, Indiana finds itself breaking even with home state representation in the presidential cabinet. While two Hoosiers are leaving the White



House with President Trump – Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar – Hoosiers Ron Klain (as White House chief of staff) and Pete Buttigieg (as secretary of transportation) will soon be cabinet members in President-elect Biden's administration.

Given the influence of Hoosiers on both sides of this transition, it raises the question, which other Hoosiers have held such prestigious positions? As it

turns out, there isn't a great source for finding a historical list of presidential cabinet members by state, and the offices considered cabinet-level have fluctuated over time.

In order to better account for the history of Hoosiers in the life of our nation, I've taken the time to build such a list by combing through the annals of American history, making a list of which offices were considered cabinet-level at various points in time, and then researching the backgrounds on those who were appointed to the relevant offices. Let's look first at the offices which are considered cabinet posts:

Vice presidents (6 Hoosiers): The most obvious office is that of vice president, of which Pence is the sixth from Indiana. With our outgoing vice president hailing from Indiana, there's little need to cover the history of Hoosier vice presidents here because those stories have been constantly written for the past four years.

Heads of executive departments (16 Hoosiers): Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution doesn't use the word "cabinet", but it does establish that the heads of each executive department are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate to advise the president "upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices." These officials came to be known as the Cabinet under George Washington, and since the Presidential Succession Act of 1886 these positions have made up the bulk of the presidential line of succession (named in the order of the creation of their respective departments).

There are currently 15 executive departments,

of which 14 are headed by the "secretary" positions we generally think of when discussing presidential cabinets, and the other is led by the attorney general. Additionally, there are five executive departments that no longer exist (the Departments of War, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, which were all headed by secretaries, but have not been considered cabinet-level departments since the military reorganization of the late-1940's that created the Department of Defense; and the Post Office Department, which was headed by the postmaster general and was considered a cabinet-level department from 1872 until it was made an independent agency in 1970).

Sixteen Hoosiers have headed executive departments (some led multiple departments at different points in time), and this is where Azar and Buttigieg fit in. This includes four agriculture secretaries (one as an acting secretary); three treasury secretaries; three postmasters general; two secretaries of state; two health and human services secretaries; two Interior secretaries; one attorney general; and one naval secretary. Upon Senate confirmation, Buttigieg will become the first transportation secretary to come from Indiana.

Cabinet-level Officials (4 Hoosiers): Finally, there are the cabinet-level positions. Unlike the executive department heads, these positions aren't considered to be cabinet posts by default. Instead, each president designates various positions as important enough to national interests to serve in this important advisory capacity. Because each president may have a different view of which positions rise to this level of importance, this is where we



see the fluctuation in cabinet-level jobs that makes compiling a historical list a bit tricky.

In general, though, this tends to include many positions in the Executive Office of the President, an organizational unit that has only existed since 1939. Key positions generally considered cabinet-level include the

White House chief of staff, a title that has only existed since 1961, and only consistently used since 1979; the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), a position created in 1970, and which every president since has filled as a cabinet-level post; and the director of national intelligence (DNI), which similarly has always been filled as cabinet-level since its creation in 2005.

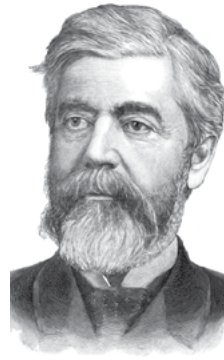
Other positions, particularly those outside of the Executive Office structure, can be harder to follow. For instance, Hoosier Bill Ruckelshaus was appointed the first administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970 by Richard Nixon – and served in the same position after 1983 for Ronald Reagan – but he never served in a presidential cabinet because this position wasn't elevated to cabinet-rank until 1990, where it has remained. Meanwhile, the position of ambassador to the United Nations has pinballed back and forth, as it was considered cabinet-level under Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama, but not under George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump.

Four Hoosiers fit the bill for these offices, including two OMB directors and two directors of national intelligence. This is where Klain will fit in, and he will be the first Hoosier to serve as a White House chief of staff.

Facts about Hoosiers in presidential cabinets (26 Hoosiers total):

Perhaps fittingly, the first Indiana native to serve in a cabinet post was appointed by a president with Hoosier ties. Caleb Blood Smith was elected to five terms in the Indiana House of Representatives – including two during which he served as speaker of the House – before being elected to the U.S. House. His last term in Congress coincided with the single congressional term of Abraham Lincoln, when both were members of the Whig Party.

A dozen years later as president, Lincoln would make Smith his first secretary of the interior. A year into the job, though, Smith found he had little interest in the office. He had Lincoln appoint John Palmer Usher, then serving as Indiana's attorney general, to be his assistant secretary and carry out most of the duties of the office. A few months later, Lincoln would appoint Smith to a vacant



Health & Human Service Sec. Alex Azar (top), Treasury Sec. Hugh McCullough, Sec. of State Walter Gresham, and OMB Director Mitch Daniels with President George W. Bush.

judgeship on the U.S. District Court for Indiana, and preserved Indiana's cabinet representation by making Palmer the interior secretary.

At the start of his second term, Lincoln would add another Hoosier to his cabinet when he named Hugh McCullough – the first and only president of the state-run Bank of Indiana, and then the first president of the Second Bank of Indiana – as his secretary of the treasury. He would hold this job past Lincoln's assassination and through the entirety of Andrew Johnson's term in office. President Chester A. Arthur would appoint him to the same post for the final six months of his term in office, making McCullough the only Hoosier to serve in the cabinets of three different presidents.

From Lincoln through Trump, 29 different men have served as U.S. president, and Hoosiers have served as cabinet members for 21 of them (and soon to be 22 of 30 once Biden assumes the office with Klain as his right hand). But after Lincoln put three different Hoosiers in his cabinet, no president until Trump (who in addition to Pence and Azar appointed Dan Coats to serve as DNI) would have that many again. Indiana's sole native president, Benjamin Harrison, appointed two fellow Hoosiers to his cabinet, including the only U.S. attorney general from Indiana, William H. Miller, and the first secretary of state from Indiana, John W. Foster.

Coincidentally, when Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland defeated Harrison in the 1892 election, he replaced Foster with Hoosier Walter Q. Gresham as secretary of state. This is notable for a few reasons: First, Gresham was one of the most prominent and notable Indiana Republicans of the era, and his life story that culminated in being appointed to a Democratic cabinet is worth telling on its own (which I will do soon). Second, Gresham had previously served as both postmaster general and treasury secretary for President Arthur, making him the only Hoosier to serve in three different cabinet posts.

Over the next 70 years, Hoosier membership in the cabinet would wane. Though Indiana did send two vice presidents to the White House in this period, there were only three executive department heads, who only served

for a combined six years. Since Lyndon Johnson made Joseph Barr the treasury secretary for his last month in office, each president except Jimmy Carter has had at least one Hoosier in his cabinet. That trend will continue under Biden, as Buttigieg and Klain continue this tradition of Hoosier influence.

A full list of all Hoosier cabinet members can be found at CapitolandWashington.com.

Other cabinet members with Hoosier ties (five near-Hoosiers):

I'll close by mentioning a handful of individuals I have not included on my list. In general, I've counted as Hoosiers those who were raised in Indiana, those who moved here in adulthood to establish themselves professionally, and those who were Indiana residents at the time of their appointment. I have not included John Hay,

who was born in Salem but moved to Illinois while still a toddler. When Lincoln, a friend of Hay's uncle, became president, he took Hay to Washington to serve as his private secretary; he would also later serve as secretary of state for both Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt.

Similarly, I have not included the trio of Indiana University alumni who served under President George W. Bush (Paul O'Neill as treasury secretary; Rod Paige as education secretary; and Robert Gates as defense secretary, a post he also held under Obama). If I had, the younger Bush would have had five Hoosier cabinet members, by far the most of any president. But even without including them, the influence of Hoosiers on our federal government in recent history remains steadfast. ❖

Advice to Biden folks from a Bushie

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – Partisanship aside, there is no greater professional bond in my opinion than the one formed by those who held similar jobs across many presidential administrations. From Oval Office events to racking up miles on Air Force One, those of us who worked in the White House Press Office have experienced similar highs and suffered similar lows. So when asked this week to share a few words of advice with the incoming Biden White House Press Office, I jumped at the chance and sent along these thoughts.



Always Take the Time to Double Check Your Work. This applies to any job, to be sure, but the consequences of even an innocent typo can be catastrophic in The White House. No matter where one sits on the totem pole, especially when stationed in the West Wing, the eyes of the world are upon you. Double check every statement, every email, everything that comes from The White House through your fingertips. Trust me when I say you don't want to send a New York Times article critical of the president that is meant for a mass staff distribution list to the press release list instead. You especially don't want to do it twice (ugh).

You Have Two Masters. This is cliché by now, but it is most especially true after the tumultuous four-year battle between the Trump Administration and the press corps. There is great symbolism in the real estate occupied by the press office and in particular the press secretary's

office (50 feet from the Oval Office and 50 feet from the Briefing Room podium). When appropriate, advocate for media access as fiercely as you advocate for the president's policies, at home and abroad. Foreign governments are skilled at trying to take advantage of the language barrier and confusion to shut out the American media on their soil. Stand up and protect access for our press and the right of the American people to know what their president is saying and doing.

Get to Know the Veterans, They Will Help You Succeed. They are the unsung warriors of the networks and newspapers: The camera operators, sound technicians and photographers who have been there and done that time and time again from Reagan to today. They can help you navigate the unique circumstances of managing logistics within the White House complex and on the road. Sometimes a new White House crew wants to do things differently simply to do things differently. If you do, and the veterans of the press corps question a movement or the timing of an event, take heed and listen to their advice. They are trying to help you help them, which again, is all in service to the public you serve.

Share, Share, Share. Sharing is caring. And when you work at the White House, at least for me, there was no more gratifying feeling than sharing the experience with friends and family near and far. I lost count after giving my 300th West Wing tour. It seemed as though my mom offered them to anyone she ran into at our Region-based grocery store, Strack & Val Til. But even though it meant an extra hour in the office or coming in on a "day off" over the weekend, you can never replace seeing the look on someone's face when they gaze into the Oval Office for the first and, probably for them, only time.

Finally, Enjoy Every Second Because It Goes By Fast. Don't let walking through the gate become mundane. There is nothing mundane about what you're doing and where you're sitting. We Bush 43 White House types like to circulate this quote from our departed friend and

colleague, and my former boss, Tony Snow: "Stop once a day and pinch yourself. The White House, with all its pressures, intrigues, triumphs, betrayals, joys and disappointments, is the most special place you will ever work. Look out the gates at the people who slow their gait as they pass, trying to get a glimpse of someone – anyone. They know what you're likely to forget. You're blessed. Work hard. Be honest. Understand the honor of your calling. Leave no room for regrets – for someday, in the not-so-distant future, you will be back where you started: On the sidewalk with the other folks, gawking at that grand, glorious, mysterious place – where Lincoln walks at night, and

our highest hopes and dreams reside."

You made it through the gates, Team Biden. It's time to rise to the occasion. And if you have any questions, I am only a phone call away (but I will probably let it go to voicemail, so be sure to leave a message). ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for former Director of National Intelligence and U.S. Senator Dan Coats. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis.

Let America be America

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPOUR – So much has changed in the past 12 years since the last Democrat was inaugurated as a president of the United States. Those of us who were there in Washington witnessed a day when the snows cleared around the District of Columbia, and the crowds were so great, even ticketholders were denied entrance to a clear but cold inaugural, pierced by bitter winds.



The night before, then Rep. Mike Pence joined other Hoosiers at the Indiana Society of Washington gala at the hotel where comedian Mark Russell created his

brand as a political humorist.

Today, Pence has gone from aspiring to essentially retiring from political life, possibly heading back to Columbus, Ind., where his name is still proudly emblazoned on welcome signs at the city limits.

Wednesday's inaugural will harken a new voice for the inaugural poem, and just the second African-American poet ever to deliver one. Maya Angelou presented what was arguably the best at the 1993 inaugural. This inaugural poem will focus on unity.

The words we can all relate to right now come courtesy of another African-American poet, Langston Hughes. There was a time 85 years ago when he wrote "Let America Be America Again" on a train trip home to visit his mother in the Midwest. If you've never read it, Google it. It hits home in these times:



I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek –
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak."
Like King, there was hope in his words.
"I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain of grab the land,
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
I am the farmer, bondsman to the soul
I am the worker, sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean."

His poem is a hymn for those unrequited by freedom in the freest country there ever was. From everywhere we came, and yet despite all we have, there are so many unfulfilled. His plea is one Joe Biden could make in his inaugural address, not to ask what people can do for America, but to realize what we were meant to be:

"We must take back our land again, America.
Oh, yes, say it plain.

America never was America to me,
and yet I swear this oath –

... Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft and stealth and lies,
We, the people, must redeem

The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain –
All, all the stretch of these great green states
– And make America again!"

Clearly, it's a time for renewal and for civil dialogue if not civic discourse. It's a time for blame to end and for pride to be restored. It's a time for America to feel good about being America again. ❖

Kitchell is the former mayor of Logansport.

Holcomb declares foundation 'held strong'

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb declared during his virtual fifth State of the State address Tuesday night that "Hoosiers have risen to meet these unprecedented challenges" on the COVID-19 pandemic and economic contraction, revealing, "The state of our state is resilient and growing. Our foundation has held strong."



Noting that 9,000 Hoosiers had died in the pandemic, Holcomb said, "It's impossible to calculate the far reaching ripple effect of the personal and community loss of lives and livelihoods, but it is reason for us all to pause in a moment of silence – in prayer, if so inclined – for each and every one of these beloved souls. Will you please join me?"

Holcomb said the state is gearing up vaccinations expected to end the pandemic. "When you're eligible for your vaccination appointment, it's as easy as calling 2-1-1 or logging on to ourshot.IN.gov, just like more than 600,000 of your neighbors already have," he said.

On the teacher pay issue, Holcomb said, "Schools also are expected to receive hundreds of millions of dollars in additional pandemic federal aid. And, the Teacher Compensation Commission Report identified 37 different state and local ideas to reduce costs and increase revenues for our public schools, and we should examine them closely to put more funds into teachers' pockets. When, not 'if' – when we do this, we will be one of the best in the Midwest for teacher pay, and we'll be better able to attract and retain teacher talent, including attracting more minority candidates."

Missing from

the address was follow up from his Aug 18 speech on historic racial tension, which he said was at an "inflection point" following the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis last spring.

The governor described the state as now able to restore many state agency budgets, restore higher education funding and increase it in each of the next two years, increase K-12 funding by \$377 million, make new investments in our state parks and Indiana State Fairgrounds,

and build a new Indiana State Police lab and new Indiana National Guard armory. Additionally, the governor recommends paying off \$400 million in teacher pension debt, the outstanding bonds on I-69 and the mortgages for three state hospitals. By eliminating these recurring costs, the state frees up money to provide flexibility in the budget for priorities such as increasing education funding.

"Our decisions, our discipline, now enable us to do things that many other states won't be able to do for years to come," Gov. Holcomb said. "For Indiana, the future is now, and the world continues to hear Indiana's engines roar."

Holcomb also celebrated accomplishments and focused on next steps for each of the five pillars outlined in his Next Level Agenda: Cultivate a strong and diverse economy; pass the state's ninth straight balanced budget; expand Manufacturing Readiness Grants to enable companies to modernize their operations and triple federal defense investment in the state; maintain and build the state's infrastructure by investing an additional \$100 million to connect Hoosiers and businesses to high speed internet; restart the \$90 million Next Level Trails program; complete I-69 three years ahead of schedule and continue with future plans to upgrade U.S. 30 and 31.

On the Public health front, Holcomb vowed to continue the "It's Our Shot, Hoosiers" COVID-19 vaccination plan; Protect pregnant workers by providing reasonable workplace accommodations; Expand the OB navigator program to 25 additional counties this year; and Increase telehealth services.

And he vowed to provide businesses and schools

with coronavirus liability protections, outfit Indiana State Police officers with body cameras. Launch a Diversity Data Dashboard, complete and share the outside review of the state's law enforcement academy and agencies, and plant one million trees throughout the state.

"Hoosiers are struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many workers are clocking in overtime at their essential jobs to provide for their families – all

while facing the prospect of contracting the coronavirus," said Indiana Democratic Party Executive Director Lauren Ganapini. "Gov. Holcomb and the Indiana Republican Party have created an economic mirage full of job commitments and false hope, when the truth reveals the state lost 'good jobs'. Hoosiers should not hold the INGOP to their word, because it's just a lot of talk with very little action on many issues." ❖



Indiana's emergency powers must include checks & balances

By JOSHUA CLAYBOURN

EVANSVILLE – Emergencies occur in many forms – terrorist attacks, environmental catastrophes, natural disasters, riots, pandemics, to name a few. Such emergencies lead, in turn, to far-reaching problems. Long ago and in the recent past, policymakers saw that existing laws might hinder emergency responses and further endanger public health and safety. Like many other states, Indiana addressed this danger by adopting laws specifically granting the executive branch broad, flexible powers.



Emergency powers originate in belief that a centralized, streamlined response wielded by the executive can succeed more quickly and efficiently than a normal legislative process. But authority vested solely in the executive branch includes many potential abuses of power, particularly when the executive possesses sole authority to declare an emergency and then respond to it.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities worldwide and in Indiana enacted travel restrictions, lockdowns, business closures, and mask mandates to slow the disease's spread. Even if such steps were necessary, the state should enact them in a constitutional manner limiting the potential abuse of power.

In Indiana gubernatorial responses to COVID-19 occurred over a period extending beyond nine months and never involved any legislative vote or formal legislative approval. For some of the most consequential government actions in generations, in Indiana one elected official – the governor – made every decision with no formal checks and balances.

When public emergencies arise in a functioning democracy, a natural tension develops between need for prompt, efficient action on one hand, and desire to act within checks and balances under rule of law, on the other hand. Such balancing led Abraham Lincoln to ponder in 1861, "Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness? Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?"

Although few American governors abused their powers during the coronavirus pandemic, many governors did resort to a dizzying array of irrational and contradictory

rules. And history teaches us that some executives will inevitably abuse their authority after opening Pandora's box of emergency powers. This conundrum motivated America's Founders to divide power among several institutions even during emergencies, yet that division of powers continues blurring. Studying emergency powers necessarily involves studying separation of powers, that unique delineation of authority and responsibility between independent branches to foster a system of checks and balances.

By separating powers among branches, the Founders sought to safeguard against tyranny. We need separation of powers and checks and balances not merely in spite of emergencies, but often because of them. A strict separation of powers is more, not less, important during crises. Yet, at both national and state levels, and in both emergencies and non-emergencies, American democracy increasingly works this way: The executive directs, the bureaucracy enacts, the judiciary imposes. The legislature directly representing the citizenry may do nothing at all.

Indiana legislators should revise our emergency power laws to incorporate more checks and balances while maintaining a streamlined, flexible legal system for emergency response. Specifically, all emergency declarations should carry a sunset provision requiring legislative approval for renewal or extension. Emergency declarations should require approval from designated leaders of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. And the Indiana General Assembly should possess authority to call a special session to address any emergency legislative needs or gubernatorial overreach.

The American Founders provided an insightful, healthy skepticism toward concentrations of power based on history's demonstrations of dangers without checks and balances. Sadly, our separation of powers – and the checks and balances brought with it – remains under constant stress. Emergencies pose the biggest threat to proper delineation of authority between executive and legislative branches. Although executives need flexibility to respond to emergencies, unfettered authority leads to disastrous consequences.

Indiana must renew its commitment to separation of powers principles. Just as the Founding Fathers rejected hereditary monarchy, present-day Hoosiers must reject rule by executive fiat. ❖

Joshua Claybourn is an attorney and author residing in Evansville, Indiana.

Will conservatives conserve wetlands?

By ANNE LAKER

CHARLESTOWN, Ind. — For thousands of years, a teeming wetlands ecosystem called the Grand Kankakee Marsh saturated nearly a million acres of what is now northern Indiana. Known as the “Everglades of the North,” the marsh made big bucks for the fur industry in the 1890s. Once fur went out of fashion, Hoosier leaders decided the area would be more profitable for farming and logging. They used every engineering feat to obliterate the marsh, river, and wildlife that thrived in it. Those politicians considered God-given nature an intolerable inconvenience to progress.



Fast forward to 2007. The family of former state senator Victoria Spartz planned a multimillion dollar project to develop a big box store on 60 acres in Noblesville. IDEM halted the project after the family bulldozed and filled in wetlands on the property without permits. In 2019, Spartz authored SB 229, and Gov. Holcomb signed it last spring. Not coincidentally, SB 229 removes state oversight of certain wetlands near regulated drains. Again, nature is so very inconvenient.

Now three state senators have authored a bill that continues the Indiana tradition of wetland wreckage. Sens. Chris Garten (R-Scottsburg), Mark Messmer (R-Jasper), and Linda Rogers (R-Granger) are proposing SB 389. SB 389 would flat-out eliminate protection of state wetlands in Indiana (and most of our wetlands are state wetlands).

But wait. Sen. Rogers is president of Nugent Builders, and past president of the Indiana Builders Association, while Sen. Garten is a member of the Building & Development Association of Southern Indiana.

“I authored Senate Bill 389 after having received numerous phone calls from constituents voicing concerns regarding implementation and enforcement of a few well-intended programs and sections of current code,” Sen. Garten said in a written statement. “After sharing these concerns with colleagues, I discovered that the same issues were arising across the State.”

It’s hard not to surmise that said constituents are stakeholders in the construction or real estate business. If you’re engaged in these businesses, wetlands are likely a pain in the arse, preventing you from building exactly when and where you want on your own land.

But other than builders and developers, who ben-

efits from a bill like this? The fine people of Clark or Elkhart counties? Just the opposite. Wetlands provide free, God-given services to every Hoosier. Ask an ecologist, hydrologist or even a farmer. Wetlands absorb large quantities of water which reduce flood risk—important since Indiana’s average annual precipitation has increased 5.6 inches since 1895, about the time they started draining the Grand Kankakee Marsh.

Wetlands also purify water by helping to filter nitrogen and phosphorus from agricultural runoff, which Indiana has in spades. Wetlands provide wildlife habitat and shoreline erosion control. And often, they’re just plain beautiful.

To get all of these free benefits, all we have to do is let wetlands be. Which the Indiana General Assembly saw clear to do in 2003 with the Isolated Wetlands Act. This act holds that if you want to build a hydroelectric dam, alter flow paths, or discharge wastewater, pollutants or fill material into wetlands and waterways, you need a permit from IDEM to do it.

IDEM’s mission is to “implement federal and state regulations to protect human health and the environment while allowing the environmentally sound operations of industrial, agricultural, commercial, and governmental activities vital to a prosperous economy.” IDEM’s not known for taking industry to task. But if we have no laws protecting the environment, what’s the point?

Anticipating that IDEM might not be thrilled by this IDEM-neutering bill, Sen. Garten added: “I look forward to having a productive conversation with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management through public testimony and our legislative process.”

If the senators who author and sponsor this bill are interested in the opinions of their constituents who are not in the building industry, they may be interested that in a 2020 poll of 800 registered Hoosier voters (representative of Indiana’s demographics), nearly seven in 10 Republicans agreed that protecting the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of slowing economic growth. Even at the risk of slowing economic growth.

Nature: Will it always be seen as an annoying obstacle to commerce here in Indiana? Or will conservatives soon find it politically beneficial to start conserving it? ❖

A consultant and grant writer, Laker is principal of Laker Verbal LLC. She is the former director of communications at Indiana Forest Alliance and hosts a movie review show, Flick Fix, on WQRT 99.1 FM.

Trump's shadow dogs Senate GOP

By KYLE KONDIK
Sabato's Crystal Ball

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Practically speaking, that's what the stakes of the looming impeachment trial are, which will begin sometime in the coming days (after Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi passes the article of impeachment to the Senate). Trump will no longer be president at noon Wednesday, and thus he cannot be removed from office. But if Trump is convicted by a two-thirds vote in the upper chamber, the Senate can then ban Trump from holding office in the future through a simple majority vote.

The decision may largely be up to one man, the Republican Senate leader, Mitch McConnell (R-KY). The conventional wisdom, which strikes us as sensible, is that if McConnell backs impeachment, he will be able to find 16 other Republicans to come along with him. That, along with all 50 Senate Democrats, is what it would take to convict the president in the impeachment trial, opening the door to the vote banning Trump from holding public office. If McConnell balks at conviction, this impeachment trial likely will end the same way last year's did, with Trump acquitted.

Speaking on the Senate floor Tuesday, McConnell said the Jan. 6 pro-Trump mob that stormed the Capitol "was fed lies. They were provoked by the president and other powerful people."

Some of those who would benefit the most from Trump being disqualified from running again — those who want the GOP presidential nomination for themselves in 2024 — have been some of the president's biggest defenders in recent weeks. Sens. Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) were two of the ringleaders of the effort to question election results from Arizona and Pennsylvania in

the Electoral College certification, which was interrupted by the Capitol sacking. Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL), another possible presidential candidate and the chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, voted in favor of the objection to the Pennsylvania results. Non-Trump Republican presidential contenders logically should want Trump out of the way for 2024, but they likely feel that if they are seen as anti-Trump, they won't be able to win the nomination.

In other words, those with future presidential aspirations in the GOP likely will stick with the president, leaving it up to Republican members of the Senate whose aspirations do not go beyond that chamber to block Trump from seeking the Republican nomination in 2024.

One also wonders if there may be some sort of de facto barrier erected against Trump running again even if he is not convicted in a Senate trial and subsequently disqualified. One possibility, as suggested by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) in a revelatory interview last week with Center for Politics Director Larry Sabato, would be if Congress enacted a requirement that any presidential nominee publicly release 10 years of tax returns, something Kaine suggests Trump would not do.

Trump's approval with Republicans remains strong, but among the broader populace, the president is limping to the finish line. A raft of national polling on Trump's approval has been released over the last several days, and Trump's approval rating has sagged to an average of 39% approve/57% disapprove in the FiveThir-

tyEight average. The spread was 45% approve/53% disapprove on Election Day.

It's reasonable to believe that Trump's real level of approval may be higher than conventional polls suggest. The first bit of evidence comes from the election results themselves: Trump lost the national popular vote 51%-47%, so he ran a little ahead of his approval. The national exit poll conducted by Edison Research for many major media outlets found that Trump's approval with the electorate was 50% approve/49% disapprove; another poll of the electorate, the VoteCast, conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for the Associated Press and Fox News, found Trump's approval with the electorate as 47%



approve/53% disapprove. So the preelection polling probably understated Trump's approval rating.

However, whatever Trump's "real" approval number is, it's likely lower now than it was at the time of the election.

As McConnell and other Senate Republicans ponder what they should do about Trump, they also have to consider what impact their actions might have on Trump's position within the party. Part of what has sustained Trump, arguably, is that Republicans have generally stayed in lockstep with him. Trump had no presidential primary challenge of note, and Republicans almost uniformly backed him in the impeachment process in late 2019 and early 2020. No House Republican backed impeachment, and only Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT) voted to convict Trump in the Senate trial.

This time, 10 House Republicans voted in favor of impeachment, and, in all likelihood, more than just Romney will vote to convict in the Senate. Could a public break with Trump from some leading Republicans create more of a so-called "permission structure" for Republican voters to break with Trump, too? Or will Republicans who vote against Trump be punished by voters? Would Trump hurt Republicans in other ways, such as by creating a third party, which he reportedly has discussed according to the Wall Street Journal? These questions are what Senate Republicans have to ponder, and it's hard to know the answers in advance of whatever decision they make in the Senate trial.

We suspect that the full story of the Jan. 6 Capitol disgrace has yet to be told. The Senate trial may help to fill out the story and determine how culpable Trump, his allies, and other elected officials were in what happened. That could move public opinion, too.

This leads to yet another important, unanswerable question: How long will the events of Jan. 6 linger in the broader political consciousness?

To us, the scene represented the most alarming sight on American soil since 9/11. But we also cannot assume that others will feel the same way. The 2022 midterm is still well in the future, and the issues that will animate that election are a mystery.

From a historical perspective, just an average midterm performance by Republicans would be more than enough to flip both chambers of Congress next year. Republicans will need to net just a single seat in the Senate and a half-dozen or so in the House. Since World War II, the president's party has lost an average of 27 House seats and 3.5 Senate seats in midterms, although individual yearly results have varied widely.



U.S. Sen. Todd Young on Air Force 1 with President Trump. Young is a key lieutenant of Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and has not said where he stands on Trump's impeachment, but has said that the Capitol insurrection occurred because of a lack of truth from the president.

Joe Biden, as president, could end up presiding over a strong economic recovery as the nation (we hope) eventually leaves COVID-19 in the rearview mirror. A divided GOP with Trump remaining a major and divisive figure could lead to outcomes like we saw in the Georgia Senate runoffs, with an engaged, united Democratic Party fending off a slightly less engaged and united GOP. That is one midterm possibility; there are others that would be better for the GOP.

On this, the day of Biden's inauguration, we find ourselves still fixated on the man leaving office, Trump. This is much as it was during the campaign, when Trump and his allies sought to make the election about Biden, to insufficient avail. The best midterm results for the presidential out-party typically come when they can make the election a negative referendum on the president and/or the president's party.

The first order of business for Republicans in 2021, thus, probably should be working toward making sure the midterm isn't a referendum on the final days of the Trump presidency. ❖

Yesterday's normal is Neverland

By MORTON J. MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS – The “normal” economy of 2019 is our launching pad for the post-pandemic world. We’ll be able to measure changes with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data on wages for 725 occupations in each of the 50 states.



In 2019, the average (mean) annual wage in Indiana, for all occupations, was \$46,770. The median wage was \$36,960, which tells us half of Indiana’s workers made less than half more than that amount. In 2019, our average wage was 27% (\$9,810) higher than the state’s \$36,960 median wage.

The average wage is almost always higher than the median wage. A few high paid executives and managers can boost the average wage way over the median. Many companies boast of their average wages giving the impression they pay their workers well. Indiana’s average wage in 2019 was 9.7% (\$5,004) below the average for all states; our median wage was 8.2% (\$3,320) below the median for all states.

When we break out the Indiana figures for 22 occupation groups, management tops the list with an average wage of \$102,280 and a median wage of \$87,340. This spread of \$14,940 between the average and the median fell behind the \$22,550 differential in the legal

occupations and \$17,430 in the health practitioners and technical occupations.

For those concerned with the wage disparities in a given occupation, the average vs. median comparison might be a useful tool. Among Indiana’s 22 major groups, sales and related occupations led with a 49% differential between the average and median wages. Ranking 22nd (last) with a 5% difference was the computer and mathematical occupations group. Is this low difference due to the relative newness of the field and/or the comparative youth of the workers?

Yet it is foolhardy to use one number alone to signal inequity among workers. It might be an inequality, not an inequity, due to hours or weeks worked in a year, seniority, or productivity.

Occupational groups are quite diverse. Consider the arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media group. Here Indiana’s 470 athletes and sports competitors have an average wage of \$166,100 and a median wage of \$118,460. The same group includes 7,590 Hoosier coaches and scouts whose average wage was \$38,170 with a median of \$27,510. Some readers might find this disparity between coaches and competitors unconscionable. Should/ Can we lower one or raise the other?

As lower paid workers are let go, average and median wages rise. Some familiar occupations may disappear with the adaptation of technologies and new management approaches.

None of us know how the labor market will look AC (after COVID). But DC is already different from BC and we cannot ignore the adaptations being made all around us. Today’s data may resemble sepia tone photos of the past. ❖

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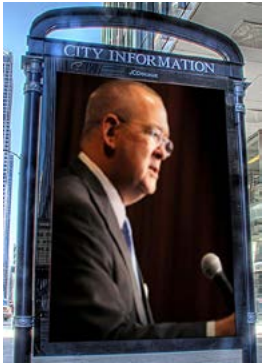
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A recap of the Trump presidency

By **MICHAEL HICKS**

MUNCIE – The end of Mr. Trump’s presidency is a good time to review the policy landscape of the past four years. As with any president, there are successes and failures as measured against his own standards of success. The rest of us might offer judgements as well. In the case of our 45th president, I am tempted to call this the good, the bad and the ugly. I review them in order.



First, the good. Mr.

Trump’s successes include sweeping removal of many of Mr. Obama’s executive orders, and regulatory expansion. Regardless of your feelings about the wisdom of any of these orders, Mr. Trump demonstrated the fleeting nature of non-legislative policy maneuvers. Of course, these are likely to

disappear in the coming weeks as well.

Mr. Trump successfully attacked ISIS, and dismantled a deeply flawed Iranian nuclear deal. He also attacked individual Iranian terrorists, sending a stark message to that regime. His policies led to a modest improvement of relations between nations in the Middle East who fear the spread of Iranian terror.

His domestic economic policy successes were limited to tax reform that brought our corporate taxes in-line with other developed nations and reduced loopholes. He made individual income taxes more progressive, and reduced the compliance burden on millions of families. Some of this will remain very popular, and I commented favorably on that policy in this column.

These successes are tempered by lack of follow up. Mr. Trump did little with Congress, so faces the same erasure of his executive orders that faced Mr. Obama. In confronting Iran, he weakened NATO, and offered no follow-up to Iran’s violence that would bring to bear a coalition outside the Middle East. He failed to reduce spending or confront any major spending program during the longest economic recovery in history. In short, a lack of vision and discipline meant that his policy victories are written in sand.

Now the bad. Mr. Trump failed to “build a wall” on our southern border, and that which he did complete was paid for by American taxpayers. That was an ineffective plan, so we are lucky he failed, but it also set back an important immigration debate. His predecessors will find it more difficult to reach an immigration compromise because of Mr. Trump, and for that we are all worse off.

He launched a trade war that empowered China, raised taxes on Americans and significantly damaged our manufacturing economy long before anyone heard of COVID. Today, we have fewer factory jobs than when Mr. Trump took office, and a larger trade deficit with China. I think these are bad standards to judge a president by, but these are his own standards. According to them, he failed badly.

After four years we have fewer jobs, more inequality and more modest stock market expansion than when he entered office. Mr. Trump added to the federal rate at nearly twice the speed of any democratic president in 50 years. Even without COVID, Mr. Trump would’ve racked up the largest federal debt during an economic recovery in U.S. history. But, there was COVID, which falls squarely into the ugly part of his presidency.

COVID will kill well over half a million Americans before we are fully immunized to this round of it. No American president could have prevented a large mortality event. But, if the U.S. response had been as effective of the next worst country, we’d have fewer than half the number of deaths as we have experienced. That is Mr. Trump’s doing. He purposefully downplayed the risk of COVID to protect his reelection campaign. He fostered the politicization of simple public health measures and failed to provide test kits, and now it appears, vaccines. He

intentionally failed the basic duties of his office.

Mr. Trump’s willful lies and negligence helped fuel the spread of the disease and kill somewhere between 250,000 and 400,000 Americans. This came on the tail of an impeachment that should have seen him removed from office for abuse of power.

The final piece of ugliness was the most brazen assault upon our constitutional order by a sitting president in our history. For more than two months, the president carefully crafted not only a lie, but a vast untruth surrounding



election fraud. He spread this false narrative — the most perfect example of propaganda in American history — to tens of millions of his supporters. He personally created the ecosystem for a constitutional crisis. He then unleashed a physical assault upon our Congress to obstruct the Constitution.

Four years ago, I wrote a hopeful column describing potential policy achievements of a Trump presidency. Today must be a bitter moment for conservatives hoping his would be a transformational presidency. Instead, conservatives find themselves in disarray, and

chained to insurrectionists. Ultimately, his few policy achievements are a mirage, undone by his many flaws. In the end, Mr. Trump's most lasting legacy will be the importance of character, in this the lack thereof, in public service. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.

Fact checkers steer clear of politics

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON — Candace Owens has declared war on fact-checkers. "Facebook is trying to delete me," she said in a recent video. "Big Tech is trying to delete us, our movement. We must stop them." I first saw the video on Facebook, the platform Owens claims is trying to delete her. Four days later, the social media platform had yet to remove the post. My guess is it's still there.



If Facebook is trying to delete Owens, it's failing. Of course, Owens isn't much worried about facts. The website PolitiFact lists four fact checks for the conservative commentator.

In June, she claimed Black Lives Matter was not a charity. That same month, she accused George Soros of funding the violent protests in Minneapolis.

In April, she claimed "Everyone is only dying of coronavirus now," and the previous April, she called the Republican Party's Southern strategy a myth.

PolitiFact rated all four claims as false. Owens, though, insists the fact-checkers are motivated by political bias, and she cites an example. "Weeks ago, @Facebook censored a post of mine which truthfully stated that @JoeBiden is NOT the President-elect," Owens tweeted. "So I got lawyers involved. Conclusion? @PolitiFact uncensored the post & admitted that they LIED by rating my post false. The fact-checkers are lying for Democrats."

Actually, that's not what happened. I contacted PolitiFact and got a response from Aaron Sharockman, the organization's executive director. PolitiFact does not check the facts in every post, he said, but it sometimes issues ratings for multiple posts based on research it has already done. "Through that marking process, we mistakenly rated

a piece of content from Ms. Owens with a related but not specific enough story," Sharockman said. "After we were made aware of our error, we removed the rating, which triggered Facebook to remove its penalty."

The organization did not confess to lying. "None of this speaks to the accuracy of Ms. Owens' content," Sharockman said. "We did not analyze it as part of our fact-checking efforts. What we did was correct a technical error."

I tried to get him to talk about Owens' claims of bias, but he wouldn't bite. PolitiFact goes out of its way to avoid getting down in the mud. "Our core principles are independence, transparency, fairness, thorough reporting and clear writing," the organization says on its website. "The reason we publish is to give citizens the information they need to govern themselves in a democracy."

PolitiFact formed in 2007 with the goal of checking claims made during the 2008 presidential campaign. "From the beginning, PolitiFact focused on looking at specific statements made by politicians and rating them for accuracy," the organization says on its website. "PolitiFact is run by the editors and journalists who make up the PolitiFact team. No one tells us what to write about or how to rate statements. We do so independently, using our news judgment."

Owens has a different motivation. She's trying to raise money for her fight against fact-checkers. "Everyone PLEASE take five minutes of your day to watch this video — and more importantly, to SHARE it," she said on that social media post. "I have been warning everybody for months about what these Facebook 'fact-checkers' represent, and I am pursuing them legally because I knew it would culminate into this extraordinary moment in American History: A sitting president of the United States has been censored. None of us is safe."

Even before Donald Trump came along with his barrage of lies, the fight for truth on social media was never ending. PolitiFact is on the right side of that fight. Candace Owens is not. ❖

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Mark Bennett, Terre Haute Tribune-Star: A large bronze plaque hangs on a wall near the east entrance of the U.S. Capitol. It's been on my mind for the past 10 days. It honors unlikely heroes. Everyday people who summoned bravery to save lives, sacrificing their own in the process. They saved members of Congress, regardless of their political views. Their heroism preserved the house of America's democracy — the Capitol. Those heroes were the 40 passengers and crew members of United Airlines Flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001. Aside from the crew, nearly all were strangers to each other when hijackers took over their flight, an excursion intended to quietly take them from New Jersey to San Francisco. Through discreet cellphone calls to loved ones, the passengers learned that coordinated terrorist hijackers had sent three other jetliners crashing into the World Trade Center in New York, and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Flight 93 passengers saw their crew attacked and the plane rerouted eastward, toward Washington — less than a half-hour away. In a matter of minutes, they took a vote, prayed and rushed the cockpit, trying to overtake the hijackers. They didn't wrest control of the aircraft, but did force the hijackers to crash it in a quiet Pennsylvania field, short of their likely target, the Capitol. All of those passengers and crew members perished — the last of nearly 3,000 people killed that morning, 9/11. Grateful members of Congress helped dedicate the plaque in 2009. It lists the names of the 40 passengers and crew members. It also carries this message: "In memory of the passengers and crew of United Airlines Flight 93, whose brave sacrifice on September 11, 2001, not only saved countless lives but may have saved the U.S. Capitol from destruction." On the day of the dedication, the sister of a Flight 93 passenger told an Associated Press reporter, "I'm glad this plaque is being dedicated today, and not only for the passengers and crew of Flight 93, but for everybody. This really shows the strength of the human heart. At the end of the day, we stand for our country." Almost 20 years later, violent rioters disgracefully breached and vandalized that same Capitol building. It was a dark, awful day in America's history. ❖

Peter Nicholas, The Atlantic: Mike Pence publicly defied the president once in four years, and for that solitary show of independence, his own political future could be all but finished. The vice president's journey from acolyte to outcast seems inconceivable. This is someone who would pause after mentioning Donald Trump's name during an address so that the audience had time to clap—and who would then stand silently at the lectern when it didn't. Editing Pence's speeches, aides would cut references to Trump when they didn't believe there was any reason to mention him. Reviewing the changes, Pence would take his Sharpie and add Trump's name back in, a former Trump-administration official told me. But Pence will see no reward for his fealty, or for his actions on January 6, when he resisted pressure from Trump to toss out

the election results. The springboard to the Oval Office that so many vice presidents have used is gone. Not only has Trump's base turned on him, but Pence is complicit in the Trump administration's most egregious actions. Lashing himself to Trump was a path to becoming president—the only path, really—for a man who has long wanted the job. As a lowly representative from Indiana, he talked privately with former Vice President Dan Quayle about how best to position himself for a White House bid, gaming out whether he should run as a member of Congress or as Indiana governor. Imagining his next move is difficult. "The biggest and most obvious problem he has is he has to distance himself from the president, and when you're vice president for four years, you can't do that," Bill Whalen, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a former aide to California Governor Pete Wilson, a Republican, told me. Alternatively, "going into a crowded primary field [in 2024], he could say, 'Hey, I'm the guy closest to Donald Trump.'" But after last week, he can't do that either. When Pence's most memorable act is ushering in the Joe Biden presidency, the MAGA crowd becomes less a reliable following than a possible mortal threat. Spurred on by Trump's remarks at a rally before the Capitol riot, some in the mob went looking for Pence. "Hang Pence!" they chanted, as they flooded the halls of Congress. Worried about Pence's safety, federal agents have now surrounded his official residence in Washington, D.C., with chain-link fences and concrete barriers for extra protection. Any credit Pence gets for certifying Biden's victory comes from people who probably wouldn't vote for him anyway. "Live by the sword, die by the sword," Whalen said. ❖

Chris Cillizza, CNN: Moments before Donald Trump boarded Air Force One for the final time on Wednesday morning, he offered this cryptic message to his supporters: "We will be back in some form. Have a good life." Which, undoubtedly, struck fear in the hearts of every Republican politician (See: "McConnell, Mitch") who has spent the last days and weeks trying to ensure that Trump never, ever comes back. While trying to decipher what Trump means is no simple task, there was a hint of what he might have been talking about in the news on Tuesday night Trump, according to The Wall Street Journal, is considering the possibility of starting a new party, which he has contemplated calling the "Patriot Party." If Trump is serious about starting a party to rival the GOP (and Democrats), it would be an utter disaster for Republicans. As WSJ's Andrew Restuccia noted: "The president has a large base of supporters, some of whom were not deeply involved in Republican politics prior to Mr. Trump's 2016 campaign." Yes, yes, he does. And if Trump urges all of those supporters to flock to a more Trumpian party than he believes the Republican Party is positioned to be, it immediately splits the traditional GOP vote into two factions. And neither of those factions is large enough to be a majority in a general election. ❖



Pence says they'll move back to state

COLUMBUS, Ind. — "There's no place like home." Those words, famously uttered by Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz," were also spoken by the now former Vice President Mike Pence as he returned to his hometown of Columbus Wednesday after attending the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris (Wiersema, [Columbus Republic](#)). After the inauguration, Harris and second gentleman Doug Emhoff escorted the Pence and his wife Karen to a black Chevrolet Suburban SUV outside the U.S. Capitol. The couple then flew into Columbus Municipal Airport at about 2:50 p.m. Wednesday on an Air Force plane. They were welcomed by a crowd limited to about 50 guests that included local and state officials, as well as family members such as U.S. Rep. Greg Pence. "Serving as your vice president was the greatest honor of our life, but now that that season of service has come to an end, we just had to come home," Mike Pence said, as he stood on-stage beside his family, behind a sign on the credenza that said "Back Home Again." It is not clear if Pence plans to reside in Columbus after leaving office. However, he did say that he has promised Karen that they are moving back to Indiana come summertime. After some initial remarks by Indiana GOP chairman Kyle Hupfer, Lt. Gov Suzanne Crouch, Congressman Greg Pence and Karen, the now former vice president spoke to his supporters. He expressed his gratitude to them and many others — including God, his friends, his family, the people of Indiana and his staff. He also thanked Donald and Melania Trump "for all they have done to make America great again." "We'll always be grateful for the opportunity that they gave us to serve and the way that they allowed us to make a difference in the life of this nation," he said. "I



will always be proud to have served in an administration that came alongside doctors and nurses and first responders and organized a whole of government response, at the federal, state, and local level, to meet this moment," Pence said. "To place us at a time where we've arrived at the beginning of the end of this pandemic. I believe the day will come soon when we put the coronavirus in the past and heal our land."

Azar says Trump finish 'tarnished'

WASHINGTON — For four years, Republican staffers and agency chiefs worked for President Donald Trump to keep the federal government humming and, in many cases, dismantle Obama-era policies they believed ran counter to free-market principles ([ABC News](#)).

In the end, the political aides departed Washington this week with their legacies forever linked to a president who refused to concede a democratic election and instead inspired a mob of rioters to confront Congress. "Unfortunately," wrote Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar in a lengthy resignation letter outlining his agency's accomplishments under his watch, "the actions and rhetoric following the election ... threaten to tarnish these and other historic legacies of this Administration."

Buttigieg to cite change of guard

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's nominee for secretary of transportation, Pete Buttigieg, is pledging to carry out the administration's ambitious agenda to rebuild the nation's infrastructure, calling it a "generational opportunity" to create new jobs, fight economic inequality and stem climate change. "We need to build our economy back, better than ever, and the Department of Transportation can play a central role in this," the 39-year-old former mayor

of South Bend, Indiana, intends to tell the Senate Commerce Committee, according to prepared remarks for his confirmation hearing Thursday. "You have my commitment that I will work closely with you to deliver the innovation and growth that America needs in this area," he said in the remarks.

Ratcliffe sues Gaming Comm.

INDIANAPOLIS — Longtime casino executive Rod Ratcliff is suing the Indiana Gaming Commission for suspending his gaming license last month ([IBJ](#)). In a lawsuit filed Tuesday in Lake County Superior Court, Ratcliff argues that the commission violated his right to due process and says he believes the commission is trying to force him to sell his interests in the new Gary casino to Hard Rock International, a partner in the project. In December, the Gaming Commission suspended Ratcliff's occupational gambling license for 90 days after tying him to a federal investigation involving campaign finance violations. "By operating outside of its legal scope and unfairly judging Mr. Ratcliff as guilty by association, the Indiana Gaming Commission has created a problem where none existed and delayed what will be a significant contributor to the Lake County economy," Robert Vane, a spokesman for Ratcliff, said in a statement. "Mr. Ratcliff and his team have been working to meet the demands of the Commission, but he will not surrender his constitutional rights in the process."

No disturbance at Statehouse

INDIANAPOLIS — It remains to be seen whether Hoosier backers of former President Trump will embrace the call for unity issued by Democratic President Joe Biden (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). One hopeful sign: No Trump supporters, opponents, or anyone else determined to make mischief or cause destruction showed up at the Indiana Statehouse on Wednesday.